

Oriental Theatre
828 S.E. Grand Avenue
Portland
Multnomah County
Oregon

HABS No. ORE-55

HABS
ORE,
26- PORT,
3-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. ORE-55

THE ORIENTAL THEATRE

ORE,
26-PORT, 3-

Location: 828 S. E. Grand Avenue, between Morrison and Belmont Streets, Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon.

USGS Portland Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 10.525525.5039725.

Present Owner: W. E. and R. H. Roberts, Morgan Building, 720 S. W. Washington Street, Portland, Oregon.

Present Use: Last used as a first- and second-run movie house in 1968, the Theatre was demolished in February, 1970.

Statement of Significance: The Oriental Theatre, the second largest moving picture theatre built in Oregon, was erected in conjunction with an office building and contained notable examples of thematic decor derived from an exotic culture. The Portland architectural firm of Thomas and Mercier engaged a then internationally known local sculptor, Adrien Voisin, to design interior sculpture in the manner of Khmer sculpture at Angkor Wat. The theatre sign and marquee made remarkably early extensive use of neon lighting.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: March-December 1927.

2. Original and subsequent owners:

1927 George Warren Weatherly, a prominent East Portland business man, had the 12-story Weatherly Building, the first "skyscraper" in East Portland, and the adjacent Oriental Theatre built. The dual complex was also known during construction as the Crystal Ice & Storage Co. Office & Theatre Building, a name derived from Weatherly's company.

1948 Clayton Weatherly, G. W. Weatherly's son, became owner at the death of his father.

1969 When Clayton Weatherly died in May, 1969, a corporation of heirs of the estate of G. W. Weatherly acquired the properties of the Weatherly Building Company.

1969 In November 1969, the Weatherly heirs sold the two buildings to W. E. and R. H. Roberts for \$322,000. Tenants were directed to vacate the premises by December 1, 1969.

1970 The office building was renovated, and the theatre was demolished in February 1970 to provide space for a parking lot to serve the office tenants.

3. Architects, contractors, interior designer, and consultant:

- a. Architects: Although the 12-story Weatherly Building adjacent to the theatre was designed by the Portland firm of Sutton and Whitney, another firm, Thomas and Mercier, was chosen to design the Oriental Theatre, apparently both because of the firm's association with East Portland and for its previous experience in theatre design. The resulting building was surpassed in size among Oregon theatres only by the Portland Publix Theatre, later renamed the Paramount, by the noted theatre architects Rapp and Rapp of Chicago. The cost of the Oriental Theatre was variously reported between \$300,000 and \$500,000. The cost of the Weatherly Building and the theatre together exceeded \$1,500,000.

Thomas and Mercier formed their partnership in 1924 and had since resided or maintained their office on the East Side. In 1927 they were at 412 East Washington Street, and they moved into Suite 200 of the Weatherly Building upon the completion of the "skyscraper." Their other Portland theatres were the \$135,000 Bagdad, called a "fine example of the Italian Renaissance" style, and the \$40,000 Capitol. Their McDonald in Eugene cost \$70,000, and their Egyptian in Coos Bay was built for \$60,000. The \$200,000 Grand Central Public Market, with which George W. Weatherly was involved as Vice President of the sponsoring corporation, was perhaps the firm's most significant other Portland work. Among their buildings in other communities of the Willamette Valley, the most important was the Union Memorial Building at Oregon State College in Corvallis.

Lee Arden Thomas, the senior partner of the firm, was born in Plattsmouth, Nebraska. He received his Bachelor of Science degree in 1907 from Oregon State College and his Bachelor of Architecture degree in 1910 from Cornell. He also attended a special architectural course at Columbia University. His practice

began with the Somerville and Putnam in Seattle. On moving to Portland, he was associated with A. E. Doyle. He subsequently spent three years on the architectural staff of the Portland School District before starting private practice in 1913. When the Oregon Architects Registration Law was enacted in 1919, Thomas was named by Governor Olcott to the first State Board of Architect Examiners.

The junior partner, Albert Mercier, was born in Ishpeming, Michigan and educated in local schools before moving with his parents to Spokane, Washington in 1911. His early architectural career was spent in Portland on the staffs of Whitehouse & Price, and George K. Keith. After service in World War I, Mercier joined the staff of Wenatchee, Washington architect Marshall A. Dean and was later a draftsman for the National Builders Bureau. He returned to Portland in 1923 and became Thomas's partner in 1924.

- b. Contractors: The general contractor was the Portland firm of Robertson, Hay and Wallace with R. R. Clark, a structural engineer, as consultant. The contractors listed the job as "Crystal Ice & Storage Co. Office & Theatre Building." The casting of interior sculpture was subcontracted to David L. Hoggan, Plaster and Stone Industries, Portland. The plumbing, heating, ventilating and automatic fire protection contractor was Hastorf-Lord, Inc. of Portland. J. L. Austin, Builder was the contractor for the roofing, dressing, and some hardware. The Charles K. Spaulding Logging Co. supplied the Virginia-oak outer vestibule doors, and the ticket booth, and Ben Berg was painting contractor for the interior decoration. The National Theatre Supply Company was a subcontractor for interior decoration, draperies, carpets, wall hangings, tapestries, "Hindu" hand-carved furniture, Heywood-Wakefield Opera Chairs, stage draperies, hardware, orchestra equipment, and the nine projection machines. The remarkably early extensive use of neon lighting in the theatre sign and marquee was contracted to the newly-formed Electrical Products Corporation of Oregon, a Portland firm.
- c. Interior designer: Adrien Alex Voisin, chief modeler of the Oriental Theatre's interior ornament, had carried out comparable projects at the Orpheum Theatre in Los Angeles, San Francisco's El Capitan, and the Fox Theatre in Oakland. He ultimately gained international recognition as a sculptor, showing his

studies of American Indians in New York and Paris. Voisin was awarded a Diplôme d'Honneur at the Paris Colonial Exposition in 1931 in recognition of the anthropological importance of his life studies of Nez Percé, Umatilla, Cayuse, Walla Walla, Palouse, and Blackfeet. The bust of Vachel Lindsay at that poet's memorial in Springfield, Illinois; Father McQuade's Memorial and the Fairfax Whelan Memorial Fountain in San Francisco; and a posthumous bust of the Hudson's Bay Company Factor John McLaughlin are perhaps his best-known works.

Voisin was born in Islip, New York on October 4, 1890 of partly Basque descent. After studying painting under John LaFarge and Yale School of Fine Arts Dean Sargent Kendall, he spent eight years in Paris studying sculpture under Paul Bartlett at l'Académie Colorossi and Camille Lemaire at l'École Nationale des Arts Décoratifs, among others, and supplemented his studies in Italy, Germany, Belgium, and Spain. After being wounded during U. S. Army service in World War I, he convalesced in California and then settled in Portland, where he occasionally collaborated with some of the foremost Pacific Northwest architects.

- d. Consultant and others: Fokko Tadama (1871-1937), known as Frank Tadema, served as design consultant for Far Eastern art. Tadama was born of Dutch parents in Bandar, Sumatra, where his father was assistant to the Governor General of the Dutch East Indies. After study at the Amsterdam Academy of Fine Arts, he exhibited his paintings in Paris, London, New York, and San Francisco. In 1910, after a personal tragedy, he left Holland and settled in Seattle, where he founded the F. Tadama Art School and taught extension courses at the University of Washington. In 1937, aging, ill, and unemployed, he took his own life. His knowledge of Angkor Wat in Cambodia and Borobudur in Java contributed directly to the ambiance of the Oriental Theatre. The artisans who executed the work included the Belgian Etienne Vernet, Ireland's Hoggan, Von Bochel from Germany, a Swedish father and sons named Odin, and the Italian plaster casters Zaffaroni and Cazonnetti.

4. Original plans, construction, etc.: Half-sized positive photostatic copies of five original theatre plan sheets (foundation plan, balcony floor plan, longitudinal section, footing details, and balcony main girder detail) were conveyed to the new owners of the Weatherly Building in

1969. Negative copies of these are in the HABS files.
(The longitudinal section bears the following notation:
"Note. Detail to be furnished later for all orn.
plaster & ceiling grills.")

5. Alterations and additions: The original marquee was replaced, a snack bar was built, and some original interior paint schemes were altered.

B. Historical Events, and Persons Connected with the Theatre:

1. George Warren Weatherly: G. W. Weatherly, for whom the theatre was built, was born near Portland in 1868. Following a Portland public school education, he worked in the building trades. By 1892, he owned a confectionary from which he developed the Weatherly Creamery Company, an ice cream business. He is locally credited with inventing the ice cream cone (already in use in St. Louis in 1904) in 1905. In 1907 he merged his company with the Crystal Ice and Storage Company, of which he was President for 18 years. In 1925 he became Chairman of the Board of the Western Dairy Products Company, and in 1926 his interest turned to the erection of a first "skyscraper" for East Portland, the 12-story Weatherly Building. G. W. Weatherly later served on the Oregon State Tax Commission; as Vice President of the East Side Commercial Club; on the Portland Chamber of Commerce; as Vice President of the Citizens National Bank; as a Director of the Oregon State Bank; as Vice President of the Grand Central Public Market; and as President of the Weatherly Farms Corporation. He died in 1948.
2. Walter Eugene Tebbetts: Tebbetts was the promoter who persuaded Weatherly to build a theatre adjacent to his office building and who was the theatre's first lessee and manager. He was born in Des Moines, Iowa in 1885, graduated from a Beatrice, Nebraska business college, and had leased and operated Chicago's Italian Opera House before his arrival in Portland circa 1909. After a brief period in home building, he was running the Empire Theatre in East Portland by 1911. When the Oriental Theatre was being built, Tebbetts had owned, managed, or built 12 Portland moving picture theatres, including the New Grand; Alhambra, built by him in 1914; Montavilla; State; Highway; and Hollywood, a "suburban playhouse" built in 1926. He then sold his holdings to West Coast Theatres, Inc. and travelled abroad. Perhaps, although it is by no means certain, he visited the East Indies. He is said to have conceived the idea of a theatre designed to resemble an East Indian temple during his travels.

Tebbetts's tenure from 1928 to 1933 at the Oriental Theatre was the zenith of his career. He was then a member of the East Side Commercial Club and was elected first President of the Allied Exhibitors of the Northwest.

3. Ground breaking: Ground was broken for the "Crystal Ice & Storage Co. Office & Theatre Building" on March 21, 1927. By July, the reinforced concrete frame was in forms up through the third floor. Thereafter progress on the theatre was faster-paced, although minor obstacles, such as delays in the shipment of balcony steel from Poole & McGarry's plant, occurred. Cross-bracing trusses were found to be a foot too long. Notwithstanding delays, the theatre received its brick and terra cotta facing in September and was completely ready in time for its gala New Year's Eve grand opening.
4. Opening, and early management: The Oriental Theatre opened on the night of December 31, 1927, with Tebbetts named as both "Owner and Manager" in the souvenir brochure. The stage attraction was "An Atmospheric Prologue." Conductor Joseph Srodka and the "Oriental Symphony Orchestra" ascended on a platform to play. Another ascending platform bore organist Glenn Shelley and the console of the \$50,000 Wurlitzer Unit Orchestra Organ. The silent films shown were "The Girl from Everywhere," a two-reel Mack Sennett comedy, "the first of its kind to be tinted in natural color," and "Moon of Israel," a biblical spectacle starring Maria Corda and Arlette Marchal and claiming a cast of 50,000 people. Mayor George L. Baker and the audience of prominent Portlanders and East Side boosters were presumably well entertained, although, considering the late hour, they probably did not find any need for the "Kiddie Circus Nursery" Tebbetts provided for patrons of his "only Downtown East Side first run" theatre. He evidently intended the "East Indian" ambiance of his 2,038-seat theatre to rival the films in entertainment value. The "2,400 lights in the massive dome" lighting the "finest examples of ornamental plaster in America" were meant to dazzle, as was Hubert Beckwith Groves's prose in the souvenir brochure, of which the following is a sample:

We are sure that by all this splendor and mystery of the East that was, those who tarry within the walls of this great temple will be impressed, and it shall be unto them as the heat of the soft south wind from the sands of the vast Sista, stirring the dead leaves in the hills of Amalli, in the kingdom of Amarapar.

Groves noted that Tebbetts had supplied comfort as well as luxury, as the following passage attests:

And you shall have chairs in the temple, such as there is now not in any other temple in your land. They shall be of full upholstering with three sets of steel springs, two and forty in number in each set. And the back will be made lovely and soft, and tilted at a most restful angle.

With "two big features a week: opening days Sunday and Thursdays," Tebbetts proclaimed his theatre, then the largest in Portland, the "first run, East Side home of Warner Bros., United Artists, First National, Pathé, Tiffany, and Radio Pictures." He managed the Oriental with imagination and showmanship, inaugurating a policy of benefit performances whereby local clubs and civic organizations could raise funds, and he emphasized family entertainment, featuring the basement nursery for the convenience of parents attending the 25¢ matinees or the 35¢ evening shows.

Tebbetts was ably assisted by Clarence F. Conant, formerly his projectionist at the Hollywood Theatre, who had been with him for 17 years. Conant was reputed to be "one of the finest lighting experts on the coast" and had invented many novel stage lighting effects. Seven of the nine projectors in the Oriental's "largest projection room on the Pacific Coast" were designed by Conant. He had "recently invented several novel devices that he will use for the first time at the Oriental," and he operated all curtains and lights from the projection room. (The Oriental boasted of the "largest electric switchboard on any stage," as well as claiming to be the "first theatre on the Coast to install a Third Dimension motion picture screen.")

Tebbetts's young orchestra conductor, Josef Srodka, had been a child prodigy billed at age 14 as the "wonder Violinist" during a concert tour of European cities. Before arriving in Portland circa 1924 to become first viola of the Portland Symphony Orchestra, he had been music director for the U. F. A. Palace in Berlin. The Universum-Film Aktiengesellschaft (Universal-Film Joint Stock Company), the largest European moving picture concern, had Srodka write film scores and made him company music advisor. He also directed the inaugural music at all U.F.A. theatre openings. As the new sound films supplanted theatre orchestras during 1928, this experienced musician's association with the Oriental Theatre was relatively brief.

When Tebbetts sold his holdings in 1926, there had been a national box-office slump that lasted, more or less, until the introduction of sound films. His theatre was probably adapted quite soon for "talking pictures," and by 1930 Exhibitors World-Herald awarded the Oriental a bronze plaque for the excellence of its acoustics and sound systems. Thereafter, Tebbetts advertised this, and added "WHERE THE SOUND IS BETTER" in neon lights to the Oriental's marquee. Tebbetts appears eventually to have turned his management duties over to Carl R. McFadden. Although the Oriental prospered moderately, the stock market crash of 1929 and the ensuing depression eroded Tebbetts's hopes, and he left the enterprise after only five years.

5. Subsequent management: After the management of Tebbetts and McFadden, the Oriental was leased to John Hamrick from 1933 to 1935 and was managed by Floyd Maxwell. In 1935, the theatre was leased to Evergreen Theatres, and by 1940 to the Rainier Theatre Corporation. The Fox-West Coast Theatre Company operated it for two successive leases, providing some of the better management. Fox-West Coast monopolized major Portland theatres during much of that period. Around 1952, the growth of television brought on a decline in attendance, and Fox-West Coast dropped its lease.

In 1961, although the Oriental had a history of proving burdensome to independent operators, Carl McFadden's son John tried to revive it as a first-run house. His success was only momentary. In 1965 the City of Portland leased the Oriental from Clayton Weatherly for 2½ years as a civic auditorium. (The violinist Isaac Stern, shortly after his successful effort to save Carnegie Hall from demolition, appeared with the Portland Symphony Orchestra, providing one of the last major events in the theatre's history on February 28, 1966.) By April 1968 Clayton Weatherly leased the house to the Oriental Theatre Company, a partnership formed by Don K. McMurdie, I. I. Benveniste, and A. J. Tersi, at a very low rent. The partners were assisted in various ways by Dennis Hedberg, a local theatre organ enthusiast who had been laboring to save the Oriental since 1959. In spite of all efforts, the new venture lasted only six months.

After the death by heart attack of Clayton Weatherly in May 1969, the heirs decided to sell, in spite of an offer by William Parr of Hamiston, Oregon to sign a premium lease to keep the theatre open. So large a theatre, by then surrounded by produce vendors, could not return a profit.

In November 1969 W. E. and R. H. Roberts bought the "skyscraper" and theatre for \$322,000. On January 17, 1970, the contents of the theatre were auctioned off, and in February 1970 the Oriental was demolished to clear a parking lot for the office building next door.

6. Epilogue: In the town of Sherwood, some 15 miles southwest of Portland, a theatre named "The Robin Hood" was built in 1946 for about \$65,000. It was maintained until 1962 but was neglected until 1969, when it was bought for restoration. With the demolition of the Oriental Theatre in 1970, some plaster sculpture was salvaged and reused in the newer theatre, renamed "The Sherwood Oriental Theatre." One or two heads from the auditorium dome, one full-sized figure, several frieze sections with bas-relief panels from vestibule or proscenium, elephant and monkey panels, an elephant mask and Makara head are among the reinstalled objects. Much painted "corbeling" has been used, in imitation of the former Oriental imitating Khmer architecture, behind the "modern" concrete, metal, and glass-block facade of the refurbished Sherwood Oriental Theatre.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and Unpublished Sources:

- a. Plans: Copies of five plans were given W. E. and R. H. Roberts, new owners of the Weatherly Building, in 1969. Copies of the copies are in HABS files.
- b. Old views: Construction photographs of the "Crystal Ice & Storage Co. Office & Theatre Building" were taken by Stevens Commercial Photographers, Portland. Interior views were taken early in 1928 by the Artcraft Photo Shop, Portland, and eight of the latter were published in the Pacific Coast Architect in April 1928. Prints of these two series are in a bound album on file with Robertson, Hay, and Wallace, Contractors in Portland. A 1941 photograph of the marquee is in the Angelus Studio Collection at the University of Oregon Library in Eugene, Oregon. A detail of it was reproduced in Imprint: Oregon, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Spring, 1975). (This issue was supplied to HABS courtesy Lee H. Nelson, Technical Preservation Services, HCRS.) An exterior photograph by an unidentified photographer was reproduced in Souvenir Commemorating the Gala Opening . . . (HABS copy supplied courtesy A. Craig Morrison, Theatre Historical Society.

- c. Interviews: Interview with Walter L. Haslem, for 28 years manager of the Weatherly Building, circa 1941-1969, in December 1969 by Elisabeth Walton (Potter). Interview by HABS Writer/Editor Lucy Pope Wheeler with Robert L. Van Nice. (In 1927, as a Portland High School graduate not yet headed for the University of Oregon and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Van Nice was for a year laborer and "errand boy" during the construction of the Oriental Theatre. Young Van Nice felt fortunate to be working in the presence of so distinguished an artist as Adrien Voisin, and on the periphery of the field of architecture, which he was later to enter. Having made an instrument survey of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, Van Nice is now Senior Research Associate for Byzantine Studies at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D. C.)
 - d. Reference inquiries: Specific inquiries were answered by the following: Academic Personnel Office and Mary Etta Ward, Fine Arts Librarian, University of Washington, Seattle; Sandra Freeman, Seattle Times Library; David L. Morse, Illinois State Library, Springfield; Janice Worden, Photo/Map Librarian, Oregon Historical Society, Portland; Dennis Hedberg, Organgrinders, Inc., Portland; Robert K. Rothschild, Oregon Historical Society Volunteer; Thomas R. Olson, Literature/History Section, Library Association of Portland; Brother Andrew Corsini, Theatre Historical Society, Notre Dame, Indiana; and Ruth Gouverneur, Royal Netherlands Embassy, Washington, D. C.
 - e. Other sources: Oregon Artists Reference File, compiled by Louise Rasmussen for the Oregon State Library, Salem, Oregon.
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- Oregon Journal, March 2, 1927, p. 11, "New Sign Firm Formed..."; April 17, 1927, p. 2, "Plant to Open May 1, Electrical Products Firm New Building;..."; Dec. 25, 1927, Section 3, p. 1, "Theatres Occupy Center Stage in

Building Activities"; Sept. 20, 1928, p. 27, "Nation's Biggest Sign to be Here:...erected by the Electrical Products Corp., for the Richfield Oil Company..."; circa March 26, 1961, "Shows Back at Oriental"; circa Feb. 15, 1970, "Auction Sale Called 'Final Act' for Ornate Oriental Theatre"; Feb. 16, 1970, "Oriental Theatre Furniture, Fixtures Offered Via Hammer of Auctioneers"; Feb. 17, 1970, "Showplace to Disappear."

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PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural interest and merit: The Oriental Theatre was a notable example of late romanticism, a lavishly ornamented "thematic" moving picture theatre of the 1920s, when theatre operators sought to attract audiences through novel décor and luxurious appointments. The Orientals' interior was designed to suggest a Buddhist or Hindu temple. Motifs from Angkor Wat and certain Indonesian sites were interpreted by Adrien Voisin, a well-known sculptor, and were executed in plaster. ("Sacred elephants" were among the most prominently displayed details.) The interior was regarded as singularly successful in its creation of a rare and exotic ambiance. The Oriental Theatre was built in conjunction with an office building, a then increasingly common practice in the economic planning of urban movie houses.

2. Condition of fabric: Good until demolished in 1970.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 81' (three-bay front) x 190'; three stories; north party wall was shared with first five stories of the Weatherly Building; lower half of blind south wall abutted adjoining building; rectangular plan.
2. Foundation: Reinforced concrete.
3. Wall construction: A visual relationship of the theatre facade to that of the adjoining office building was established by the use of the same cladding - pressed yellow brick and cream terra cotta - and through the vertical proportioning of the two side bays and the use of quoining on both buildings. The brick and terra cotta surface of the theatre was applied to reinforced concrete bearing walls. The cast terra cotta details of the facade comprised a basically Italianate mélange that suggested, without any specific references, a generalized "Moresque" flavor.

The facade was formally composed in three bays and three horizontal zones, all in the same plane. The broad central bay was flanked by two narrower bays proportioned in a ratio of height to width that echoed the proportions of the Weatherly Building front. The three bays were articulated by rusticated terra cotta elements above the first floor that could have been read as either quoins or pilaster strips. The intermediate strips were compound, and wider than the others. The terra-cotta-clad first floor contained three rectangular openings, the theatre entrance flanked by two conventional shop fronts. Above a broad lintel, the first floor was terminated by an enriched string course above a cyma reversa molding. The middle zone, equalled in height by slightly over three stories of the Weatherly Building, was crowned by a third "story," a blind arcade motif and its entablature. The greater part of this crowning motif, reading as a blind "third story," was in fact above the roof level and was therefore a mere parapet, or "false front." This motif was related visually to the arcuated top two stories and the corbel table of the Weatherly Building and was somewhat more than a standard office story in height.

Above the first floor, the wide central bay was designed as an elaborate terra cotta frontispiece. Except for the all-header backing of the blind arcade at the top, no brick was visible in that bay. The dominating motif was

composed of a large shallow arch with a paneled tympanum, and a triple arcade below the springing of the arch. The arcade had spirally banded Composite colonettes between which were three rectangular windows (lighting the mezzanine smoking room). Above the windows were paneled lintels, and tympana ornamented with bas relief Renaissance shields and arabesque foliation. Each of the three arcade arches was crowned by a bas relief palmette. The arcade spandrels had arabesque foliation, above which was a row of winged lion masks, between which were nine small corbel blocks supporting the base of the main arch tympanum. The tympanum had three tiers of panels containing alternating bas relief shields (some with crosses, some with chevrons) and blank quatrefoils against arabesque backgrounds. (The two center quatrefoils of the middle tier contained small windows lighting the projection room.) The extrados of the arch embracing the tympanum was edged with egg-and-dart molding, and the spandrels of the arch were rusticated.

The bays flanking the frontispiece were identical. Each was designed as a brick "panel" framed by the string course, rusticated quoins, and blind arcade. The brick were laid in alternating courses of headers and stretchers, the mortar joints making a pattern of diagonals. Each "panel" was studded with 26 widely but symmetrically placed slightly projecting Greek crosses, each formed by a stretcher and two headers. The decorative feature of each "panel" was a large terra cotta tabernacle window enframing based on the string course and rising over half the height of the "panel." (The two rectangular windows lighted rest rooms at either end of the mezzanine smoking room.) The tabernacle frames had corbelled sills and rusticated piers with foliated capitals supporting stilted triangular pediments enclosing semicircular arches. The pediment raking cornices had acanthus-enriched soffits. The arches had bolster archivolts, above which were egg-and-dart intradoses. The lintels and blind tympana were ornamented by bas relief cartouches and arabesque foliation.

The terra cotta crowning motifs, the blind arcades, were backed by brick laid in all-header bond. There were six arches in the central bay and four at each side, separated by rusticated quoins. The arcade piers rested on string courses supported by small compound square corbel blocks and were faced with shallow pilaster motifs. The arches were supported by engaged quarter colonettes with cushion capitals. The entablature was composed (in ascending order) of a fillet, a glyph frieze, a bead-and-reel molding, a low paneled parapet course, and a lower set-back capping course. Above the slightly projecting forward faces of the compound

intermediate quoining strips were bas relief blocks in the parapet course. Each of these was ornamented with two gryphons addorsed against a stemmed urn. There was a flagpole with a ball finial above each of these two blocks.

The rear (east) elevation had a four-bayed reinforced concrete base with brick infill, and a narrower one-storied bay at its south side. Above, the stage loft wall was designed as an elongated shallow slightly inset blind arcade of eight arches. The wall terminated in a corbel table and flat molded cornice.

4. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: Entrance to the theatre was through a bank of five pairs of heavy 18-paneled nail-head-studded seven-foot-high Virginia Oak doors at the rear of the open outer vestibule. The doors had metal kick plates. The shop front south of the theatre vestibule had a recessed glass-paneled wooden door. The shop next to the Weatherly Building had an unrecessed central single-paneled glass and wooden door with a single-paned sidelight. A doorway at the north end of the front had paired single-paneled glass and wooden doors. (This shop front had been altered from its original form.) The rear elevation had a stage door at the extreme south bay and a large scene door immediately north of it.
- b. Windows: The shop windows were single plate glass lights above a glazed tile base. Both shop fronts were spanned by ten-light transoms above their awnings. The three mezzanine smoking room windows within the arcade overlooked the marquee. They had paired eight-light casement sash below paired four-light transom casements. The two rest room windows had paired eight-light casement sash without transoms. The lobes of the two quatrefoil projection room windows were immovable, with movable two-light casement centers. The rear elevation had no windows, but there were two tall louvered openings in the northernmost bays of the blind arcade.

5. Marquee and theatre sign: The original marquee was a flat rectangular canopy suspended from two chains anchored to circular plates in the intermediate quoins described above. There were two-tiered attraction boards bordered by light bulbs on all three sides and seated Buddhas in niches at the corners. Subsequently, a high cresting was added. The front had ORIENTAL THEATRE in pseudo-brush-stroke lettering,

flanked by two trumpeting elephants facing inward and outlined in neon tubing. The two words were separated by a much larger neon-outlined elephant facing forward and were bordered above and below by neon curlicues. "WHERE THE SOUND IS BETTER" was blazoned in neon letters between the attraction board and the theatre name. The cresting at the sides appears to have been ornamented by neon curlicues. By 1966 that marquee had been replaced by a simpler wedge-shaped marquee with two nine-tiered attraction boards. It had curlicue red and blue neon-tube ornamentation at its apex and as apex cresting. ORIENTAL in large neon-lit pseudo brush-stroke letters formed a cresting above each attraction board.

A vertical sign 61 feet high by ten feet wide weighing 2,000 pounds was secured at a right angle to the south corner of the facade. The top read TEBBETTS, the shaft read ORIENTAL (in larger, bulb-lit letters), and the base read THEATRE. The top carried a large disk visually upheld by the trunks of two seated elephants. The disk had lights arranged in swirls to give a revolving effect. The shaft had a pattern of neon tubing that suggested the outline of a Khmer knopped colonette. This sign was the "largest NEON theatre sign in the United States," according to the Souvenir Commemorating the Gala Opening... Certainly, it was a remarkably early (late 1927) example of so extensive a use of neon lighting. The colors were red, blue, and green. The sign was removed by 1966.

6. Roof: Staggered truss roof (tallest section over stage), covered with "Viscault" (felt and asphalt).

C. Description of the Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: The front (west) end of the basement contained a children's nursery (the "Kiddie Circus") reached by enclosed stairs entered from a door near the south end of the foyer west wall. There was an orchestra pit elevator in front of the stage, and a fan room underneath the stage. Ducts for forced-air heat supplied from the adjacent Weatherly Building occupied the rest of the basement.
- b. Main floor: An open outer vestibule between two stores led to a shallow inner vestibule that was originally open to the foyer but was later enclosed by glass doors. The foyer spanned the width of the theatre and led by four doors to the auditorium orchestra aisles. The main stairway faced the inner vestibule across the

foyer and rose between plinths 11 steps to a landing, and thence by enclosed 18-step flights right and left to the mezzanine foyer. Two semienclosed lateral staircases ascended north and south against the west wall of the foyer and then turned east to reach the mezzanine foyer. There was an exit door in the north wall of the foyer. There were two exit doors in each side wall of the auditorium at the orchestra level.

- c. Mezzanine: The west section of the mezzanine level was occupied by a smoking room (also called "lounge") with a rest room at each end. The east wall of the smoking room was open to the mezzanine foyer, which spanned the full width of the building. Opposite the smoking room, a wide central vomitorium ascended 15 steps to the balcony main cross aisle. Two much narrower passages, east of the heads of the main stairs, rose four steps to lower balcony partial cross aisles.
 - d. Balcony: There were fire escape exits at each end of the balcony main cross aisle, and a north fire escape exit from the upper balcony level. The projection room was entered at its north end and was behind an upper balcony cross aisle. There was an electrical generator room above the projection room.
2. Outer vestibule: The outer vestibule was open to the street on the west between flanking terra-cotta-clad piers, the inner faces of which had single panels. The opening was spanned by a terra cotta architrave with a soffit of square panels. (The sheet metal soffit of the marquee abutted this architrave.) Metal-framed glazed display panels were mounted on both exposed faces of each pier. The vestibule was three narrow bays deep and five almost six-foot-wide entrance bays across. The tile-surfaced floor sloped slightly downward toward the street. The lower portion of the walls was seven feet high and was articulated by plain travertine pilasters on low verd antique marble bases. The side walls and verd-antique-based plain travertine dadoes above each were framed glazed display panels. The central panel of the south wall had been converted to a box office window, probably when the theatre was rented as a civic auditorium. The five pairs of entrance doors occupied the spaces between the east wall pilasters.

The travertine pilasters "supported" a tall upper wall zone of richly worked polychromed plaster. A stone-colored reel-patterned astragal in high relief surmounted

by a red course of foliate ornament in low relief ran across both side and rear walls. Above these motifs, the side walls each had three stone-colored niches between red pilaster strips. The niches had corbeled infill imitating masonry within their arched heads, and boss-studded surrounds crowned by large grotesque masks, possibly representing garudas (half-man and half-bird guardians). Within each niche was a large red high relief figure of a female celestial dancer, an apsaras (water nymph of Indra's heaven). Above the blue-painted entrance doors were five low-relief panels between red plaster strips. Each panel depicted a pair of white-skinned dwarfs cavorting amid red foliage against a blue background. They held a gold chain and flanked a red and blue lyre-shaped frame enclosing a pair of brown monkeys facing and holding a chain-supported bell. The frame and bell chain appeared to issue from the mouth of a demon mask centered at the top of the panel. The dwarfs wore dark headresses; gold necklaces, bracelets, and anklets; and waistbands with daggers. They may have represented Khmer clowns, who traditionally wore close-fitting white tunics and tights.

The ceiling had deep rectangular blue-painted coffers edged with bead molding between red-painted beams. The beams were edged by a water-leaf motif, and their inter-sections and the mid-points of their long sides were marked by pendant bosses. There were two octagonal metal light fixtures with pierced drums, and seven spotlights on their undersides.

The most conspicuous element of the outer vestibule was the free-standing octagonal ticket booth centered at the sidewalk line. It had a low plain verd antique marble base, a plain travertine dado, and was glass-enclosed between bas-relief-carved angled gumwood pilasters supporting a molded architrave, above which was a frieze with small bas relief dancing figures. The bulbous sheet metal domical roof carried an octagonal fretwork metal crowning ornament.

3. Inner vestibule: The inner faces of the oak entrance doors were stained brown. Above them, supported by plain piers on low tile bases, was a tall low-relief red and gold plaster frieze with a blue background. The frieze had a rich pattern of formal foliation, and circular animal-mask medallions apparently representing swine and foxes. The inner (east) side was originally open between plain piers spanned by stone-colored lintels "supported" by red, blue, and gold compound corbels. These openings were later enclosed by glass and metal doors below blind transoms. The

short end walls were identical. Each had a large, moderately deep arched niche containing a seated figure above a dado. The blind polychromed dado balustrade, composed of wide urn-shaped balusters and paired double vasiform balusters, rested on a very low tile base and "supported" a very broad and heavy parapet rail motif. The niche rose into the cornice and was crowned by a large horned and tusked guardian elephant mask. The shelf base of the niche represented lotus petals topped by a boss-studded edge, and the architrave was composed of a row of flame-like motifs surrounded by a row of foliate motifs. The architrave was interrupted at the springing of the arch by impost blocks ornamented by heads wearing spiky crowns. The spandrels were filled with conventional foliation, and the narrow vertical spaces between the architrave and the wall ends repeated the flame-like motifs. All of the ornament above the dado was gilded, as was the reveal of the niche. The flat rear of the niche was painted bright red and studded with gilded floral paterae.

The focal points of these two richly ornamented end walls were the identical gilded figures facing each other across the narrow vestibule. Each represented a bodhisattva (a princely disciple who was on the pathway to becoming a Buddha but had not yet renounced wealth) seated on a cushion in the position of meditation and holding a red-edged golden lotus cup in his folded hands. The scarf draped over each forearm, and the pleated loin-cloth below the legs were white. Each bodhisattva wore a necklace, earrings, and a jeweled collar. The hair was dressed in snail-shell curls with the traditional topknot, and each had the urna (Buddhist sign of supernatural spiritual enlightenment) jewel in his forehead. The vestibule floor had plain iron gratings inset in the carpet. The ceiling was a low, dark-painted plaster segmental vault.

4. Main floor foyer: The main floor foyer was divided by pilasters and piers into five principal bays, the central one flanked by narrower minor bays. The polychromed foliate pier and pilaster capitals "supported" wide flat ribs running across the segmental ceiling vault. Above a single base row of tiles, the plaster walls resembled ashlar, originally painted the mottled greenish tone of aged stone but later painted a light stone color to conceal wear. The long east and west walls had the same cornice as the inner vestibule "supported" by inward-facing compound corbels polychromed red, blue, and gold. The shorter north and south walls were virtually identical. They lacked cornices but had low-relief tympana conforming to the

segmental curve of the ceiling vault. The reliefs represented a pair of grey elephants facing each other, and two brown monkeys, against a red background with symmetrical blue and gold vine motifs. Each of these two walls had a drinking fountain toward its west end set in a flat-backed tile-lined arched niche with imitation masonry corbel infill. The inwardly shelving basins were semicircular, and the stone-colored architraves were each crowned by a polychromed demon mask. Above each fountain was a grille of tangent circles enclosing petal crosses and flanked by compound corbel motifs. The east end of each of these walls had a rectangular doorway with a corbel-supported lintel corresponding in size and similar in design to the grilles above the fountain niches. The north wall doorway lintel had an exit sign in pseudo brush-stroke letters.

The west bays, except for those at the ends, were open beneath corbel-supported cornice-lintels. The walled southernmost bay contained the doorway (rectangular, with ornamented corbel-supported lintel) to the basement stairs. The central bay and its flanking minor bays were entirely open, having no intervening piers to "support" the west ends of the ribs bordering the middle ceiling panel. The other two main bays were open above the lateral stairs. The open string stairs had ornamented risers and boxed ends. The multi-reeded balusters were bound near each end by square low-relief bands and supported a wide flat railing. The east wall bays were open except for the two minor bays and the main stairs blocking the lower half of the central bay. The other four main bays opened below corbel-supported cornice-lintels into two short narrow passages, each giving access to two auditorium orchestra aisle doors.

The ceiling was elaborately painted in soft colors on a buff ground. The ribs were stenciled in floral repeat patterns on a pale rose ground, and the two narrow minor vaults had a scattering of asterisk-like floral paterae. Four of the five main vaults contained large central areas depicting curving fronts of pale green foliage within painted borders. Deer appeared among the plant forms outside the central areas of the two main vaults nearest the middle vault, a possible reference to the deer park at Sarnath, where the Buddha preached his first sermon, "On the Turning of the Wheel of the Law." The middle vault had dark green foliate-patterned quarter circles in its four corners, and pale green foliage fronds and pale blue Chinese cloud symbols in the field outside the central and principal design, a large dark green wheel enclosing a radiance of dark red flame

motifs. Spokes resembling Tibetan thunderbolt symbols separated the inner and outer rims of the wheel and formed painted panels on the buff ground. Each "panel" contained one of four designs, a blue vase holding red fronds, a seated couple flanked by flowers, a horned animal (ox, bull, or water buffalo?) amid flowers, or a goose, identifiable as a graylag, amid flowers. The latter may have represented a hamsa (goose symbolizing the spread of Buddhist doctrine). The general effect of the ceiling patterns suggested textile designs. A brightly lit ornamental pierced-brass octagonal lantern with bulbous-domed top hung from the center of each of the five main vaults. These lights were supplemented by standing lamps of "Benares" brass work with glass-jeweled brass shades and, originally, table lamps of similar character. The original furniture included ponderous sofas upholstered in yellow satin, and a 14-foot-high walnut-framed pier glass, all carved in pseudo-hindu style. The floor was carpeted, except for a small tiled space below the south drinking fountain.

The focal point of the main floor foyer was the principal staircase centered opposite the entrance bay and rising 11 steps between low splayed plinths bearing very large reclining guardian dragons stretched along their tops. The gently sloping plinths of imitation ashlar rose only slightly above the steps. The gilded dragons, their tails upraised against the pilasters flanking the stair landing, had mock-fierce miens with open mouths, bared teeth, lolling tongues, and protruding eyeballs. Their heads grotesquely combined beaked muzzles, owl-feathered eyes, goat ears, and wattles. Earlier, the dragons had been boldly polychromed with accents of bright red (tongues, nails, spines, etc.), yellow (eyeballs and lips), white, and blue on their predominantly gold bodies. Their spade-shaped tails retained red glass bicycle reflector "jewels." The wide stairs had no railings. Instead, there were velvet-covered ropes supported by sets of three brass stanchions at each side and in the center. The slightly converging dragon plinths led the eye to the rear wall of the landing, where, against a greenish-mottled imitation ashlar background, an elaborately-framed Hindu deity in high relief constituted the decorative climax of the ensemble. Bulbously knopped gold, silver, and black engaged columns in the Khmer manner supported a flame-crested gold reverse-U, or omega, arch with a large horned and tusked gold elephant mask at its top. The flat back of the shallow niche formed by this enframing was painted a brilliant red against which flickered low relief tongues of golden flame. A two-headed six-armed semi-nude golden

god danced elegantly before the flaming background. His hands held silver weapons, a bow, a dagger, a knife, etc., and a gold disk. A narrow scarf edged with black triangles, perhaps symbolizing the tiger skin associated with Siva, was draped about him in complex windings, and the two heads wore gold and jeweled crowns linked by a silver crescent. The two heads may have represented two aspects of Siva, as a crescent moon often appears in his headress. A flaming arch is an emblem of Siva in his aspect as Nataraja, or Lord of the Dance. Whatever was intended, the relief effectively fulfilled the intention of its designer to produce a Far Eastern "temple" atmosphere.

5. Mezzanine smoking room: The major ornamental features of the smoking room were the ceiling and the two "fireplaces." The room was rectangular with a north-south axis and was entered from the mezzanine foyer through a wide rectangular opening on either of its narrower flanking openings. These openings had no ornamental trim except the polychromed compound corbels "supporting" their soffits. Opposite the openings, the west wall had three tall windows. The shorter (north and south) walls were identical. Each had a false fireplace flanked on the west by a single-paneled door and on the east by a false doorway, both trimmed by flat rectangular architraves with incised repeat patterns. Above each, a rectangular foliate grille was inserted. The doors led to a ladies' room (north) and a men's room (south). Each red-tile-lined shallow "fireplace" had a red one-tile-high semi-circular hearth and was framed by two colonettes supporting an omega-arch lintel above which was a bulbous half-dome crowned by a very large mask. The engaged bulbous-knopped black and gold "Khmer" colonettes were set against gilt foliation and "supported" an omega arch composed of two gilded nagas (serpent gods symbolizing water) with foliate tails and tangent heads below a six-headed cobra-hood "keystone." A lower, smaller omega arch headed the actual "fireplace" opening, and the tympanum between the arches displayed a gilt vase and foliage fronds. Above the plain gilded shoulder fronted by the upper omega arch, the half-dome sprang from necking above two astragals, the lower one reel or melon-patterned, the upper one paterae-studded. The shape of the half-dome suggested the form of a stupa, a Buddhist shrine mound. The large demon mask crowning the half-dome had red reflector eyes.

The smoking room ceiling was divided by two heavy parallel plaster compound "beams" which ran the length of the room and were crossed and "supported" by six heavy plaster squared ox-yoke "beams" dividing the upper zone of the room into seven bays. The undulating ox-yoke crossbeams appear to have represented naga coils terminating in or

rising from the sharp-toothed open mouths of inverted makara-head corbels. (Makaras were crocodile-monster water symbols.) These "beams" had stylized foliate bas-relief patterns, and each had a large point-ended central pendant boss. The longitudinal "beams" had foliate ornament and a range of lion masks. The large flat rectangular panels of the ceiling itself, deeply framed by the "beams," had bas-relief foliation with relatively small lozenge-shaped centers. The end wall tympana, shaped by the sinuous lines of engaged ox-yoke half-beams, contained bas-reliefs of lions on a foliate ground facing each other across the masks crowning the "fireplace" half-domes. The upper zones of the long walls (except where the three tall windows rose) contained deeply inset bas-relief figural panels.

There were three chandeliers, each in the form of an octagonal metal and amber glass lantern encircled by a metal wheel rim bearing short electric candle fixtures. These were suspended from the second, fourth (middle), and sixth ceiling bays. The floor was covered by a red and green carpet. The original furniture of the smoking room was conventional -- sofas, high-backed chairs, settees, ash-stands, floor lamps, and a potted fern or two. The Knabe grand piano was an Ampico model, that is, it had an automatic player action. The windows and doorways originally had brocade draperies, and there were Austrian shades at the windows.

6. Mezzanine foyer: The mezzanine foyer contained a broad rectangular promenade, flanked on the west by the heads of the two lateral stairways and the smoking room between them, and flanked on the east by two balustraded stairwells with the main stairs (leading to the balcony main cross aisle) between them. The main stairs rose opposite the smoking room entrance and projected into the promenade for a third of its width. Beyond the head of each stairwell was a passage leading to a vomitorium placed 12 feet in from the side wall of the balcony. The foyer walls were simply finished in plaster imitating mottled greenish ashlar above a very low red tile base. Except for a curvilinear-patterned large rectangular grille in each end wall, the balusters of the four secondary flights of stairs, and the large sculptures surmounting the plinths flanking the main stairs, all ornament was concentrated on the ceiling and its supports.

The ceiling was divided by two plain series of longitudinal beams "supported" by six larger plain crossbeams that divided the ceiling into five wide bays and two narrower

bays flanking the central bay. The crossbeams and ceiling, their centers parallel with the floor, bent downward at each side at an approximately 15° angle to create a vaguely tent-like effect. (The three ceiling sections nearest the smoking room entrance did not slope downward.) All of the ceiling sections (except the one over the main stairs) were ornamented by groups of squares deeply framed by the beams. Each square was ornamented by a bas relief foliated eight-petalled floral motif. The longitudinal beams were "supported" by small corbels attached to the crossbeams, and the crossbeams were "supported" by large compound corbels in the form of superposed fanged and bulging-eyed demon masks apparently derived from Javanese prototypes. The sides of those corbels had bas-relief stalking felines (leopards? or tigers?). The lintels of the east and west wall openings were supported by polychromed compound corbels like those in the main floor foyer below. These lintels were ornamented with bas-relief processions of animals (lions, elephants, and horses) evidently designed after reliefs on a semi-circular stone threshold (called a "moonstone" because of its shape) of the "Queen's Pavilion" at Anaradhapura in Sri Lanka, formerly called Ceylon. The prototype included oxen (omitted from the mezzanine foyer lintels) among the animals, which represented the four cardinal compass points. The ceiling was painted blue with rose accents. Three large hexagonal metal and glass lanterns, similar in style to the octagonal lanterns in the main floor foyer, lighted the mezzanine foyer. They were hung from the centers of the second, middle, and sixth ceiling bays. The floor was carpeted, and the original furniture, except for two mirrors, was conventional. The two "heavy French mirrors" (and a third one in the main floor foyer) had 14-foot-high walnut frames carved in pseudo-Hindu style with a cresting of three elephants, lotiform turnings, sea horse shoulders, peacock spandrels, and a scattering of chimeras.

The most striking decorative feature of the mezzanine foyer was the pair of large and colorful sculptures on the plinths flanking the lower six steps of the main stairs. Each represented a fantastic monster of mock-fierce aspect squatting on its haunches with its forepaws resting on the shoulders of a much smaller seated elephant-headed figure with a human body. The large monsters may have represented quasi-leonine creatures; the smaller figures in front of them were clearly meant for Ganesa, a friendly, and hence popular, Hindu deity. Each monster filled the whole space between the sloping crossbeam above and the plinth upon which it crouched. The monsters' bodies were gilded, their wattles were green, their eyes and manes

were studded with red reflectors, and their maws were bright red. Their red tongues appeared to savor the "jeweled" conical white and green crowns of the Ganesa figures as though they were licking ice cream. The very dark gray Ganesas wore necklaces, bracelets, and anklets, and their feet were slippered. Those small elephant-headed figures appeared to have slipped backward from low circular hassocks or tubs between their thighs. Their slightly comical presence prefigured the more solemn "sacred elephants" that formed so conspicuous a feature of the auditorium décor. As one ascended the 15 steps of the main stairs, leaving the comparatively simple mezzanine foyer behind, the great expanse of the lavishly ornate golden auditorium dome and its glittering chandelier burst into view with dazzling visual impact.

7. Auditorium: The auditorium was approximately 81' wide and measured about 152' from the proscenium line to the rear wall of the balcony. The height of the room was around 65' to the center of the dome. The four sloping orchestra aisles were entered from the foyer, and there were two lateral exits from each outer aisle. The two rear rows of seats were more widely spaced from front to back than the rest and were railed off to form a "loge" section seating 66. The other 29 rows seated 1,034, making a total orchestra capacity of 1,100. The balcony had four stepped aisles, a main cross aisle at the head of the stairs from the mezzanine foyer, two short lower aisles where the subsidiary vomitoria entered the side seating sections, and an upper cross aisle. The 72 "loge" seats in the two front rows were roomier than the 866 general admission seats in the other 28 rows and partial rows. The total seating capacity of the house was 2,038. There was an exit to fire stairs at each end of the main cross aisle and an additional north wall exit halfway between the main and upper cross aisles. The large projection room extended for a depth of five rows into the balcony, which had an extreme depth of about 106'. The distance from the center of the concave balcony parapet to the proscenium line was approximately 59'.

Among the most striking decorative features of the auditorium were the "sacred elephants" superposed on the capitals of the pilasters flanking the room, the rippling undulations of the serpentine proscenium arch with its immense central demon mask, and the illuminated concentric rings of the ceiling dome with its great chandelier. As one emerged from under the balcony soffit, which was covered by a regular grid of small molded reddish and silver circles interrupted only by three large

shallow saucer-shaped indirect lighting fixtures, an abundance of astonishing effects burst into view.

The north and south walls were articulated by large pilasters forming six bays, the forward three of which were divided into upper and lower zones at the balcony parapet level. The rise of the balcony cut across the three rear bays at such a steep angle that only the capital of the last pilaster on each wall was visible. The walls bowed inward toward the proscenium, where each of the two most forward pilasters was angled to negotiate the corner. The plaster pilaster shafts imitated mottled dark ashlar, and their elaborate capitals of a Khmer type were polychromed red, blue, and white with gilded accents. Above multiple neckings, the pillow-like abaci of the capitals "supported" the forelegs and heads of boldly projecting eight-foot-high "sacred elephants." Those dark gray preoccupied-looking pachyderms had inwardly-curving trunks and forward-thrusting tusks and wore headcloths. In Souvenir... Groves ascribed symbolism to their colors as follows: "On the sacred elephants you will see the white band around the head, which means purity; and upon the center is seen a blue disk, which signifies wisdom. Then upon this disk will be found a jewel of green, which means receptiveness." The elephants faced directly across the auditorium, except for the two at the junction of the side and proscenium walls, which faced outward at a 45° angle. A polychromed frieze of rinceau character, the foliations enclosing relatively small rampant dragons, rested on the elephants' heads, spanning all six bays of each side wall and the proscenium wall as well. The bays averaged a trifle over 16' on center in width and were headed by elaborately scrolled tri-lobed arches with pendant bosses, giving the effect of red and gold lambrequins of complex form.

The three forward bays of the side walls were divided horizontally at about a third of their height by open balustrades that bowed slightly forward between the pilasters to form very shallow "boxes." The balustrades were identical in pattern to the blind ones below the bodhisattvas in the inner vestibule and the one fronting the concave balcony parapet. The upper zones of all 12 bays were filled with loosely hung "tapestries" (actually painted burlap), each depicting a different scene in the life of the Buddha. The paintings, rather muted in color, were composed in a traditional Buddhist manner and were stylistically closer to certain Southeast Asian works than to Indian painting. (The quite visible presence of the

word "SLOUX" in the south "tapestry" nearest the stage has been explained as a visual pun on "Sue," committed by a decorator who repainted the drapery.) Below the balustrades and under the balcony, the first four bays were ornamented with bas-relief plaster painted blue and gold. Above a plain dado, stilted arches with molded architraves crowned by tusked and horned elephant masks (like those in the inner vestibule and on the main stair landing flanking omega arch) embraced extremely low-relief corbel arch motifs. Below those motifs, there were draped rectangular exits in the first and fourth bays. The other bays had blind arches. The stilted arches were flanked by the forequarters of low-relief trumpeting elephants with red reflector eyes. They faced each other, their trunks upraised against the swirling fronds of foliage ornamenting the swelling bases of the balustraded "boxes" above the first three bays, or against flat wall in the fourth bays under the balcony soffit.

The proscenium was approximately 38' wide between its flanking columns. The stage apron ran straight across just in front of the proscenium plane and was faced with what appears to have been a row of blue-and-white tiles. The orchestra pit below and in front of the stage had a plain solid parapet that swelled gently forward into the auditorium. The inner halves of the above-mentioned angled pilasters formed very short spur walls flanking the proscenium columns. The columns had tall complex square plinths with compound rebated corners. Above a plain base, each plinth had a molded zone, a central zone with a square relief plaque on each exposed face, and an upper zone of five accordin-like folds supporting the circular shaft of the proportionately stumpy column itself. Each shaft had three bands of bas-relief ornament, upper and lower zones representing female figures (apsarases?) in pointed-arched arcades, and a paneled middle zone with two projecting brackets. Each column supported two large corbels. The corbels facing the auditorium each carried a large 7-headed cobra hood, and the two corbels facing each other supported the serpentine proscenium arch.

(Snake motifs, while certainly uncommon in theatres, are as prominent in Khmer architecture as are dragon motifs in Chinese. The Angkor kings claimed descent from an Indian prince and a local naga (snake) king's daughter whose dowry was the Cambodian soil. The naga was assimilated from a pre-Buddhist cult into Buddhist iconography, perhaps because of the story that the naga king Mucilinda cushioned the meditating Buddha with his coils and sheltered him from a storm under his extended hood.)

The proscenium arch itself ascended from the corbels in six curvilinear steps, its rounded soffit representing the undulations of a naga's locomotion. The most conspicuous feature of the arch was the huge (at least 10'-high) demon mask that served in lieu of a keystone. The face of the arch was a broad rippling band composed of 14 panels, seven at each side of the central mask, alternating with 14 cylindrical elements. The panels arched upward and contained bas-relief rampant lions, all facing toward the center of the arch. Twelve of the cylindrical elements separating the panels appear to have been pierced and lighted from within. The two flanking the mask were slightly different in design, apparently not illuminated, and were each capped, like a short scepter, by a clenched hand. The mask, which rose to the base of the frieze capping the auditorium walls, had back-lighted eyes and mouth, the lighting of which could be controlled from the organ console. The open red mouth had two tusk-like fangs as well as upper (but no lower) teeth. Above the arch and flanking the mask, the proscenium wall spandrels were ornamented with a continuous pattern of large bas-relief coin-like gilded disks. In front of the wall and detached from it, three large pendants at either side of the mask repeated the complex arched lambrequin motif heading the north and south wall bays.

The auditorium ceiling was dominated by the great golden dome and its surrounding ring of many variously ornamented concentric moldings, the whole spanning some 80'. The broad ring (about 15' wide) surrounding the dome was concave, projecting downward at its inner rim below the ceiling plane to form a cove. This annular frame carried an inner cresting of shield-shaped elements from behind which sprang the 16 ribs of the dome, the diameter of which was about 50'. The ribs "supported" the outer rim of a multi-petaled centerpiece with a central pendant boss from which the chandelier was hung. Eleven relatively narrow bands of lacy pierced work in varying patterns "rested" on the ribs, which had crowned heads at their bases and terminated in elaborately-costumed elongated female figures that perhaps represented naginis (wives of nagas), since snakes were among the rib ornaments below their feet. The design of the dome appears to have been inspired by the dome of the Tejpal Temple, a 13th-century Jain temple at Mount Abu in Rajputana described by Rowland as follows: "There is . . . true beauty in the pearly radiance reflected from what seems like a huge and weightless marble flower. Looking up at this ceiling is to behold a dream-like vision . . . like some marvellous underwater formulation in coral and mother-of pearl. The

. . . unbelievably delicate foliate motifs have the fragility of snowflakes. Percy Brown observes, 'It is one of those cases where exuberance is beauty.'" To the rear of the dome, the balcony ceiling was spanned by beams dividing it into three large flat sections, each of which had three rectangular ventilator grilles patterned with rings like the balcony soffit. Five of the six pilastered bays were within the space covered by the dome and its surrounding ring: the sixth bay was under the first of the three balcony ceiling sections. The ceiling beam soffits were ornamented with bas-relief interlace patterns bordered by beading.

The auditorium was lighted both directly and indirectly. The metal and glass central chandelier was in the form of a large hexagonal lantern of "jeweled" grillage with a crested projecting lower ring bearing six arms, each supporting a much smaller domed circular lantern of "jeweled" grillage. The main lantern and six surrounding small lanterns all had bowls of glass beading ("strass"), and an illuminated pierced metal pendant hung from the main bowl. The chandelier had a span of 12', was 24' long, and weighed over 2,000 pounds. It was said to have contained 1,000 bulbs on three separate circuits capable of producing seven different colors. Described as "the most lavishly designed chandelier ever placed in any theatre in the Northwest," it cost "over \$7,000." Two relatively large pierced metal and glass hexagonal lanterns of simpler design hung from the forward section of the balcony ceiling, and four similar but smaller lanterns hung from the middle section. There was a small ceiling light at each side of the projection booth. The dome and its surrounding ring were indirectly lit from coves by 2,400 bulbs below 266 relamping hatches. The "tapestries" above the "boxes" were lighted from behind the balustrades, and the spandrels above the proscenium arch were lighted from behind the lambrequin motif above them. Originally, there were probably lights behind the side bay lambrequin motifs as well. The concealed lighting in the proscenium arch and its central mask have already been mentioned.

The predominant colors of the auditorium were red and gold, but blue and white were also fairly extensively used. The colors were described by Groves in Souvenir... as emblems of the Trimurti (Hindu trinity), "red for Brahma, the creator; white for Siva, the Divine spirit; blue for Vishnu, the preserver and upholder of the universe. These . . . will . . . be the basic colors for the walls . . ." The tonality of the room could be changed markedly by the color of the lighting selected. The original aisle

carpeting was red and green, and the upholstery of the green-backed Heywood-Wakefield "opera chairs" was burgundy. The cast metal gilded ends of this row seating had bas-relief stylized adorsed birds below their concealed aisle lights. The draperies at entrances and exits were originally "English sundour cloth" of a specially designed pattern. According to Groves, "This cloth will also be the basic trim for the hangings in the main auditorium." Whether that meant the "tapestries" or merely the fringe hung from the labrequin-motif bay arches is not now clear. "The curtain gracing the stage . . . will be 60 feet long and 40 feet wide . . . with balloon overdrape of rose hue. It will have a four foot border all around, which will be enriched by hand-painted East Indian symbols." The overdrape had gold tassels between its swags and was edged with gold fringe. The asbestos drop curtain was predominantly blue in tonality. In the foreground, part of a royal procession passed from left to right, including a caparisoned elephant guided by a mahout and bearing a domed golden howdah containing a princely passenger; a pair of dromedaries, each carrying a woman of the court; and part of another elephant vanishing offstage to the right. Between the animals were attendants carrying a fan, spears, and a parasol, the emblem of royalty. The procession was represented in front of a forest of blue-green palms above which, in the middle distance, rose an arched shrine and, behind it, a large building complex with a "fir-cone" temple dome. Amid the towering snow-capped mountains in the background, a misty blue apparition of the seated Buddha could be seen.

Behind the asbestos drop there were several curtains, including a gold velour curtain later replaced by a gold herringbone-patterned curtain, a green-blue curtain with an eight-foot border, and a black felt flat curtain sewn with a brocade pattern of rhinestones. They were hung so that they could be either raised and lowered by electric winders or drawn apart to either side from the center. The screen (called "picture sheet") was apparently dropped at mid-point in the depth of the 33-foot by 84-foot stage, as the radii to the projection room were drawn from that point on the plans. The stage equipment included the then "largest electric switchboard on any stage," it was claimed, and all curtains and lights could be operated from the "largest projection room in 1927 on the Pacific Coast." The orchestra pit boasted at that time "the only ascending orchestra platform in Portland - also an ascending organ platform."

8. Sound system: The organ was a \$50,000 Wurlitzer 235 Special which spoke from two adjacent chambers above the orchestra pit through a tone chute to the front of the auditorium dome. The console of the three-manual, 13-rank instrument was on its own platform toward the north end of the orchestra pit. Among the special effects were sounds imitating horses' hoofs, a boat whistle, fire gong, klaxon horn, a-ooga horn, and bird whistle. The organ was never clearly audible from many of the nearly 500 seats underneath the balcony. Another defect was the difficulty experienced by organists judging sound that came from 60' above, and some distance behind, the keyboard. Knabe Concert Grand pianos were supplied for the orchestra pit and stage. The Knabe Ampico in the mezzanine smoking room has already been mentioned.

D. Site and Surroundings:

The Oriental Theatre occupied a lot on S. E. Grand Avenue, a one-way north-to-south thoroughfare paralleling the Willamette River, in the East Side commercial district of Portland. The theatre faced west across S. E. Grand Avenue toward the ramps of the Morrison Street Bridge and adjoined the 12-story Weatherly Building on the north and a two-story commercial building on the south. Since February 1970, when the theatre was demolished, the site has been a parking lot serving the Weatherly Building offices.

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PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This Oriental Theatre documentation, prepared as part of a Historic American Buildings Survey project to record representative examples of theatre design in the United States during the first third of the 20th century, was begun under James C. Massey, former HABS Chief, and completed under the general supervision of Dr. John Poppeliers, Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey since 1972. Photographs were taken in 1969 by Lyle E. Winkle of Salem, Oregon, who also photocopied views taken by Stevens Commercial Photographers in 1927. All those, plus a photocopy of a view from the Angelus Studio Collection supplied by Martin Schmitt, University of Oregon Library, Eugene, were archivally prepared by Jack E. Boucher, HABS Photographer. A set of reference slides for use in preparing the data was donated by Dennis Hedberg of Portland. Addenda were written and final revision and editing were done in the HABS office in 1979.